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**“U.S. Posture in the Pacific: Creating Concerns for the Future Defense of Taiwan”**

by

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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## **Abstract**

As China has grown into a major economic power in the last ten years, internal unrest has led to the weakening of the Communist Party. The re-unification of Taiwan with the mainland would serve as a means to promote a sense of nationalism and restore the power of the government. With the return of the island from Japan following World War II and the subsequent occupation by the Nationalists, the re-unification of Taiwan with the mainland has long been the primary goal of the PRC government. History has demonstrated that the People's Republic of China will not hesitate to use force against Taiwan. It has also shown that the United States will be quick to intervene on behalf of the Taiwanese. While a crisis in the Straits of Taiwan may not be the immediate threat to national security, it does pose the greatest potential for a large-scale conflict between near-peer nation-states with global impact. The proposed force structure in the Pacific, as well as the continuing strain of ongoing combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are leaving the United States short-handed in the Pacific and ill-equipped to engage allies in the region, both militarily and diplomatically. As the United States military reduces its footprint in Korea and Japan, it will become more dependent on other nations in the region to provide access to smaller, more expeditionary bases. Globalization, however, is leaving these same countries less dependent on the United States than in the past. The United States must be willing to allocate more assets of national power to engagement in the Western Pacific if it wishes to maintain its role as a regional power and be adequately postured to defend Taiwan against aggression by China.

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## Introduction

This report will demonstrate that, based on the current political and military situation in both China and Taiwan, a strong potential for future use of force by China to re-unify Taiwan exists. Based on the force realignment throughout the world and in particular the PACOM AOR, the United States will not be in a position to immediately defend its interests across the Straits of Taiwan without significant assistance from its allies in the region.

The United States role in the world continues to expand and with it, its responsibility. The National Security Strategy of March 2006 lists one of the United States' focus areas as "expanding the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy."<sup>1</sup> For those states that have established effective democracies, history dictates that the United States will assist in maintaining those democracies even if it means military action. But what will it do in the case of Taiwan, an example of a democracy that has risen from authoritarian rule but is not recognized as a sovereign nation by the majority of the world? With the ongoing force realignment in the Pacific, is the United States postured to defend its interests in the Western Pacific or will it become more reliant on its allies in the area? Through the course of the following pages, the author will examine the developing confrontation between mainland China and the island of Taiwan and how the force realignment in the Pacific will affect the United States' ability to respond to a crisis if one were to develop across the Straits of Taiwan.

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<sup>1</sup> George W Bush, "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006," Washington, DC, March 16 2006.

The conflict between mainland China and Taiwan continues to grow and was directly addressed by the President in the most recent National Security Strategy as an issue that must be resolved peacefully by the two governments. China views Taiwan as a renegade province that must be reunited with the mainland. Under the current government, Taiwan is pushing for entry in world organizations and recognition as an independent democracy. The strategic implications that exist for either scenario, unification or independence, affect not only the people of Taiwan and China but also the U.S. and its allies in the region. Because of these implications, regional nations, as well as the United States, have desired to maintain a “status quo” in the region. In order to accomplish this, the U.S. has adopted a policy of “strategic ambiguity” which leaves questions as to how it would respond in the event of a crisis across the Straits of Taiwan thus requiring both sides to refrain from any type of unilateral action.

This study is divided into three major sections that will provide the framework for the author’s methodology. The first section will provide a critical look at the historical and current policies that exist surrounding the China-Taiwan conflict. The dependence on the Taiwan Straits for surrounding nations will be examined and how this translates into foreign policy by these nations toward both mainland China and Taiwan. This section will establish the background the author will use to address the role these nations are likely to play in future conflict across the Straits.<sup>2</sup>

The second section will examine the proposed force realignment in the Pacific of ground forces as well as air and sea assets. The Chinese Force posturing across the Straits will also be evaluated as a means of demonstrating the response time that would be necessary by U.S. forces should the government decide to intervene in a

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<sup>2</sup> When referring to “the Straits” in this paper, the author is referring to the Straits of Taiwan.

cross-strait conflict. An additional area for study is the proposed basing structure for the nations in the region.

The third section will evaluate the evolving political situation in the region and the consequences that it may present on the United States' ability to insert its military assets in a conflict across the Straits of Taiwan. This section will examine the evolution away from a Cold War mentality toward military presence in both Korea and Japan. Additionally, the diplomacy that will be required to obtain and operate bases in other nations will play a vital role in the United States' ability to respond in the event of a crisis between Taiwan and China. The section will also examine, historically, the role that host nations have played in determining what U.S. assets sent from their territory are permitted to do.

## **Thesis Statement**

With the Communist party struggling to hold on to power in Beijing, conflict between China and Taiwan appears inevitable. Based on the proposed force realignment in the Pacific, in particular the basing structure, the United States will find itself more dependent on allies in the Western Pacific for basing and logistical support if conflict arises across the Straits of Taiwan.

## **Implications of War in the Taiwan Straits**

A unilateral resolution of the conflict across the Taiwan Straits would have large-scale implications not only on the United States but also on the global economy, particularly in the countries of the Western Pacific. It is for this reason that it is in the best interest of the United States and its allies in the region to maintain a relative condition of status quo between Beijing and Taipei. To protect its interests in the region, the United States military must be properly postured and ready to act if called upon.

Mainland China considers Taiwan strategically vital to her national security for the following reasons:

1. Last major territory seized from China that must be returned in order to effect the nation's reunification.
2. Taiwan is home to the last major obstacle to the Chinese Communist Party in asserting its control over all of China
3. Taiwan is well positioned as a communications and financial hub for all of Eastern Asia
4. Taiwan controls vital shipping lanes in the Western Pacific
5. In hostile hands, Taiwan would be an ideal base from which to attack China
6. Taiwan is used by the United States in its strategy to contain the PRC
7. Taiwan must be denied to the United States and Japan to prevent these countries from dividing and weakening China



8. Taiwan is the key to an effective defense of eastern China
9. Taiwan is the gateway to the Pacific for its future blue-water navy
10. Taiwan is essential to China if Beijing is to be able to project military force into the Pacific in the future.<sup>1</sup>

The previous statements can be consolidated into three primary groups: Taiwan in Chinese hands means all Chinese land has been consolidated under communist rule and the threat to the mainland from Taiwan and her allies would be minimized.

Without Taiwan, China's ability to project a defensive posture past the first island chain from the mainland is limited. Without unification, China would lose its most direct passageway to the Pacific Ocean. The Chinese government considers Taiwan a key component to both ensuring a strong defensive posture as well as projecting an offensive capability both militarily and economically and for this reason will prevent Taiwan from becoming independent.

Any quest for independence by the island of Taiwan may be met with the use of military force by mainland China. The Chinese government spelled out a list of seven conditions that it considers justification for the use of force. The items are:

1. If Taipei is making moves toward independence.
2. If there is internal chaos in Taiwan.
3. If the military capability of Taiwan's armed forces is relatively weak vis-à-vis the mainland's armed forces.
4. If foreign powers intervene in Taiwan's internal affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Lasater and Peter Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security in the Post-Deng Xiaoping Era* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), 9

5. If Taipei refuses to negotiate with Beijing on the reunification issue for a long period of time.
6. If Taiwan develops nuclear weapons.
7. If Taipei's strategy of peaceful evolution endangers Beijing's existence.<sup>2</sup>

In the event that Taiwan meets one of the criteria listed, mainland China feels they will be justified in the use of force. Multiple sources cite that the Chinese would most likely employ cruise missiles fired across the straits, a naval blockade of the Taiwanese ports, submarines conducting mining operations within the straits, or a combination of any or all of these actions to impact the Taiwanese will to fight. Regardless of the type of force employed by the Chinese, the risk to neutral shipping transiting the straits would have an instrumental effect on the economies of the surrounding nations. Employment of mine warfare in both Chinese and Taiwanese ports would further compound this effect and the combination of mining the Straits of Taiwan and the ports would essentially shut down any trade with Taiwan and China. Action of this type, may force the United States to abandon its current position of "strategic ambiguity" come to Taiwan's defense, thereby leading to a direct confrontation with China.

Although China has listed the above Taiwanese-initiated criteria that will justify, in their eyes, the use of force for reunification, the potential exists that they will take a preemptive approach once they feel that their military is adequate to gain a quick and decisive victory. United States involvement in an unwarranted Chinese attack on Taiwan is a dual-edged sword. On one hand, if the U.S. gets involved, it will most likely escalate into direct conflict with China and has the potential to draw

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<sup>2</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 124

in several surrounding nations as well as U.S. allies worldwide. On the other hand, if the United States does not come to the defense of Taiwan, its credibility as the sole superpower in the world will be called in to question, as well as a loss of confidence by the Japanese in U.S. strategic protection. The latter course of action is also contrary to the pillars that the current National Security Strategy is founded on.<sup>3</sup> This conflict of interests, coupled with U.S. economic ties to China, are just some of the reasons behind its current policy of “strategic ambiguity” with respect to the conflict developing across the Straits of Taiwan.

The use of force may come as a result of Taiwanese actions toward independence or a Chinese sense that they can win a quick and decisive victory. Regardless of how justification for the use of force is reached, the impact on the economy would be felt world-wide and the dominant influence in the region will begin to shift. Should Taiwan become reunited with the mainland, China would gain control over vital sea lanes as well as the South China Sea. The potential would then exist that Japan’s relations would be diminished in the region while China’s influence over Southeast Asia is enhanced.<sup>4</sup>

An independent Taiwan also creates issues for regional players. Besides the inevitable armed conflict that would accompany Taiwan declaring independence from China, an independent Taiwan would potentially make stronger sovereignty demands

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<sup>3</sup> President Bush’s introductory letter to the 2006 National Security Strategy states that it was founded on two pillars, the first of which is promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity. Under this pillar, the President goes on to state that we will work to end tyranny, promote effective democracies, and extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies.

<sup>4</sup> David Fouse, “Japan-Taiwan Relations: A Case of Tempered Optimism.” Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, October 2004, <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/SAS/AsiaBilateralRelations/Japan-TaiwanRelationsFouse.pdf> (accessed 18 November, 2007)

over neighboring islands that others nations claim.<sup>5</sup> These island chains, which include the Senkakus, Diaoyu, and Spratly Islands, are a significant source of both natural resources and fishing revenue.

It is for the reasons listed above that the United States and her allies in the Western Pacific must be in a position to maintain the status quo in the region until a peaceful resolution can be achieved. While Taiwan is not the only political hotspot for the Chinese government, it is the most likely flashpoint that could escalate into a large-scale armed conflict that has the potential to draw in several nations in the region and throughout the world.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

## History of the Conflict

In order to fully understand the role the United States will be required to play in the region and the assistance it can expect from its allies, it is necessary to take a historical look at how the conflict across the Straits came to be and how it is perceived by other nations in the region.

With the victory by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party in 1949, the conflict across the Straits of Taiwan began. The Nationalist Party, also referred to as the Kuomintang (KMT), had fled to the island of Taiwan and re-established the Republic of China (ROC). From establishment on Taiwan in 1949 until 1972, the ROC was considered by world organizations as the ruling entity in China, despite establishment of the PRC on October 1, 1949.

China's policy toward the island of Taiwan is based on reunification with the mainland. Since its establishment, a fundamental aim of the PRC has been maintaining China's territorial integrity – including regaining control of Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> Because of this aim, the People's Republic of China view Taiwan as a “renegade province that is part of its territory.”<sup>2</sup> To what lengths the Chinese government is willing to go to re-unify the island nation and the mainland is unknown, however, military buildup in recent years across the straits from Taiwan, as well as history,

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<sup>1</sup> Bernice Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ryan Holliway, “Global: China/Taiwan,” Country Watch. (accessed via Joint Forces Staff College-Library Resources) (accessed November 7, 2007).

suggest that the use of force is not out of the question. For example, following the Korean War armistice in 1953, the PRC began taking back Nationalist occupied islands near the mainland despite the threat of U.S. intervention because the Chinese saw these as advance bases for any assault on the mainland as well as Taiwan's first line of defense. With the loss of each of the islands, the KMT drew back to Taiwan.

Several times between the end of the Korean War and 1979 the Chinese would resort to the use of or threat of force in dealing with the Nationalists. The threat of armed reunification by the mainland died down in the 1978-1979 time period with the succession of Deng Xiaoping as the head of the Communist Party of China (CCP). In an effort to gain recognition by the United States, Deng decreased the hostile rhetoric between Taipei and Beijing and sought a peaceful resolution to the cross-strait issue.

In an effort to show their good intentions toward a peaceful resolution, mainland China announced a nine point proposal in September of 1981. It was in this proposal that the Communist government first offered Taiwan the status of a Special Administrative Region that is capable of maintaining its own armed forces and would not be subject to Central Government interference.<sup>3</sup> This was the underlying document behind the policy of "one country, two systems," a policy that would later be used by mainland China with the territories of Hong Kong and Macau. The nine points also encouraged economic and social exchanges between the mainland and the people of Taiwan. In response to the nine-point proposal, a point by point rebuttal

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<sup>3</sup> While the status of Special Administrative Region was initially offered to Taiwan in the nine points proposal of 1981, the Chinese constitution was not amended until 1982 to allow for these regions. The status was specifically designed for Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. The later two would eventually reunify with the mainland under the amendment. (Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 49)

was issued by the ROC. The response became known as “the three noes”: ‘no negotiation’, ‘no contact’, and ‘no compromise with communism.’

Between the first proposal in 1981 and Hong Kong’s reunification with China in 1999, little substantive change was made in PRC proposals for re-unification. While little headway was made diplomatically, several other events took place during this period that would shape the relationship across the straits entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The formation of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986 saw an increase in pressure on the ruling KMT to allow for relations with China. Personal trips to the mainland as well as small scale cultural exchanges were allowed.

In 1988, President Lee Teng-Hui formally changed the “three noes” policy to allow for individual person-to-person contact between the mainland and the Taiwanese people. Relations during the following years would grow as Lee recognized the CCP as the governing body of mainland China and reopened official contacts although he rejected the use of force by the mainland to achieve reunification. The use of force will remain a point of contention in the following years as the mainland will refuse to remove the option from any future proposals for peace. This time period would also see many cross-strait bodies formed to improve personal and economic ties between Taiwan and China.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, a growing nationalistic movement took hold on Taiwan that did not share the same views of “one China” as the government. In a move to institutionalize cross-strait relations, Taiwan created the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), the National Unification

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<sup>4</sup> Two such bodies were Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS). These two bodies would meet in April 1993 at the Koo-Wang talks in Singapore and again in November 1993 and March 1994. Despite the meetings, no agreements were made on the agenda items. (Lee, *Security Implications*, 21-22)

Council (NUC), and the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF). The MAC, a part of the Executive Yuan, handled mainland affairs; the NUC provided suggestions to the president regarding the general policies and directions of national unification; and the SEF handled all government-related contacts and communications between the two sides.

In 1991, Taiwan released its 'Guidelines for National Unification.' Encompassed in these guidelines were the following four principles necessary for reunification with the mainland:

1. Both the mainland and Taiwan areas are part of Chinese territory. Helping to bring about national unification should be the common responsibility of all Chinese people.
2. The unification of China should be for the welfare of all of its people and not be subject to partisan conflict.
3. China's unification should aim at promoting Chinese culture, safeguarding human dignity, guaranteeing fundamental human rights and practicing democracy and the rule of law.
4. The timing and manner of China's unification should first respect the rights and interests of the people in the Taiwan area, and protect their security and welfare. It should be achieved in gradual phases under the principles of reason, peace, equity, and reciprocity.<sup>5</sup>

These guidelines acknowledged that Taiwan and the mainland were both a part of the Chinese territory and that eventual unification should occur. Until such unification, Taiwan should be viewed as a separate entity. Several glaring differences

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<sup>5</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 52



between the guidelines and the PRC's policy on government can be seen in Taiwan's call for the guaranteeing of human rights, practicing of democracy, and rule of law. As Taiwan had slowly made the transition to democracy at the end of the 80s and early 90s after forty years of one party rule and martial law, the guidelines proposed that over the course of three phases the PRC slowly make the transition to a democracy and then unification would occur under the "one country, two systems" approach. This approach was completely contradictory to the proposed Special Administrative Region (SAR) status that the PRC had offered Taiwan in the initial nine point proposal in 1981.

The PRC once again responded by releasing another white paper in 1993 that offered Taiwan the status of a SAR and maintained that their goal was a peaceful reunification under "one country-two systems." This white paper also addressed the fact that the PRC held the United States responsible for the continued division between Taiwan and the mainland. While the paper did address a peaceful reunification, it once again allowed for the use of force to accomplish this should peaceful measures be exhausted specifically stating "any sovereign state is entitled to use any means it deems necessary, including military ones, to uphold its sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>6</sup>

Tensions once again began heating up across the straits in 1994 when President Lee called on China to "accept Taiwan as a separate political entity, with jurisdiction over a different part of China" and argued that "'One-China'" should no longer be regarded as a meaningful political entity, but as a historical, geographical,

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<sup>6</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, p57

cultural, and racial entity.”<sup>7</sup> President Lee was essentially arguing that, while “one-China” may apply in terms of territorial boundaries, it no longer applied in a political context. The response from the mainland was an eight point proposal that encouraged cross-strait dialogue and recognized Taiwan as the ‘masters of their country.’

Exchanges between government entities were also encouraged as an outcome of the proposal but, as with all of the previous proposals, the mainland maintained the right to use force in order to reunify the island. Because of their refusal to renounce the use of force, President Lee refused to negotiate to end the cross-strait hostilities. This same type of rhetoric continued between the two governments in 1994 and 1995.

While the tone between the two sides indicated that they might be willing to reach a peaceful agreement, neither side was willing to give up their own self-interests.

Taiwan desired the PRC to denounce the use of force, recognize the island as a separate government and reunify under democratic rule. China maintained that Taiwan was a Chinese province and that the government that was present on the island was a local government that ultimately fell under the control of Beijing. While President Lee was by no means rejecting the prospect of reunification, he was “most assuredly rejecting China’s formula for reunification.”<sup>8</sup>

With both sides unwilling to give up their self-interests toward reunification and a major election lurking on Taiwan, hostilities between the two neighbors increased. After an approved “unofficial” visit to the United States by President Lee Teng Hui in 1995, mainland China issued the following statement: “Lee’s visit to the

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Yahuda, “The International Standing of the Republic of China on Taiwan,” *China Quarterly*, no. 148, (December 1996): 1332, quoted in Lee, *Security Implications*, 41

<sup>8</sup> Richard C. Bush and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *A War Like No Other: The Truth about China’s Challenge to America*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 70

United States, under whatever name or form or whatever pretext, is bound to entail serious consequences.”<sup>9</sup> Between July 1995 and March 1996, China conducted six major military exercises including four in which cruise missiles were launched in the direction of Taiwan. The last of these exercises fell one week prior to the Taiwanese presidential elections and was quickly responded to in force by the United States with two aircraft carrier battlegroups, one of which was stationed in nearby Yokosuka, Japan.

Following the cross-strait incidents in 1996, talks were suspended for nearly two years while the Chinese focus turned toward the American response. In the fall of 1997, the two sides resumed talks aimed at peaceful reunification and establishing what has become known as the three links between the mainland and Taiwan – direct mail, shipping, and trade services. Unfortunately, as with all previous discussions, no progress was made, and in 1999 the ROC abandoned the “one China” policy. While no formal declaration of independence was made by President Lee, his references to the nation-to-nation relationship that existed between the mainland and Taiwan caused worldwide concern. The Taiwanese government went on to amplify their policy by stating that the mainland government had been using the “one China” policy to “squeeze Taiwan internationally.”<sup>10</sup> President Lee’s new stance on relations with the mainland yielded a strong a rapid response. The Chinese government sent the signal that reunification could no longer be “put on hold” with the following statement: “As Hong Kong has returned to the motherland and Macao will hand over its government on 20 December 1999, the resolution of the Taiwan issue can no

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<sup>9</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 228 (taken from UPI report from Beijing May 11, 1995)

<sup>10</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 75

longer be delayed indefinitely.”<sup>11</sup> This statement was made by the PRC Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in January 1999.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately for the mainland, the situation showed no signs of improvement as the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, Chen Shui-bian, won the 2000 Taiwanese election. This marked the first democratic transfer of power in Chinese history and ended five decades of rule by the KMT on Taiwan. Despite a platform that was pro-independence, in his inaugural speech President Shui-bian issued what became known as the ‘four noes’—never to declare Taiwanese independence, not to change the name of Taiwan, not to enshrine the special ‘state-to-state concept’ between China and Taiwan into the Taiwanese constitution, and not to hold a referendum on sovereignty issues provided that China does not use force or threaten such action.<sup>13</sup> The first year of President Shui-bian also saw progress in the establishment of the ‘three links’ with the mainland. Despite these efforts by the Taiwanese, the PRC refused to renounce the threat of force to reunify Taiwan and little progress was made toward a peaceful resolution.

In 2005, the situation once again took a turn for the worst when mainland China passed the Anti-Secession Law. Article 8 of the law specifically authorized non-peaceful measures by the mainland to reunite Taiwan. The passage of this law was particularly disturbing from the standpoint that growing anxiety throughout Europe and Asia already existed regarding China’s non-transparent military buildup and their unwillingness to cooperate with Taiwan to resolve the cross-strait issues.

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<sup>11</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 43

<sup>12</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 43

<sup>13</sup> Chen Shui-bian, *President Chen Shui-bian’s Inauguration Speech*, 20 May, 2000, [http://members.tripod.com/~Ken\\_Davies/inaugural.html](http://members.tripod.com/~Ken_Davies/inaugural.html) (accessed October 14, 2007).

While the Taiwanese saw this as another direct threat regarding the use of force to reunite the island, others saw this as yet another reiteration of China's long standing policy with respect to Taiwan. The passage of the law was seen by some as an attempt to maintain the legitimacy of the communist regime, which relied heavily on territorial integrity and national unity as a symbol of Chinese nationalism.

Additionally, some felt that China was using the Anti-Secession Law to ensure that war did not break out. The logic behind this approach was if Taiwan declared independence, China would be forced to go to war. The threat of force by the PRC minimized the likelihood that Taiwan would move toward independence and therefore minimized the threat of war breaking out across the straits. In actuality, from the Chinese standpoint that Taiwan was already part of "one China" the law did nothing more than codify the policy that already existed but did not provide any further clarification on China's decision making regarding the situation.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of what the Chinese intentions were regarding the passage of the law, Taiwan interpreted this action, coupled with a large military buildup along the Straits of Taiwan, as the Chinese seeking unilateral resolution to the situation across the straits. As a result, President Shui-bian disbanded Taiwan's National Unification Council and stated that the National Unification Guidelines would no longer exist, citing that the people of Taiwan should be able to choose their own future and not be

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<sup>14</sup> Suisheng Zhao, "Does the Anti-Secession Law Signify Greater Irrationality of China's Policy Toward Taiwan?" [http://iis-db.stanford.edu/evnts/4139/Suisheng\\_Zhao.pdf](http://iis-db.stanford.edu/evnts/4139/Suisheng_Zhao.pdf) (accessed January 14, 2008)

forced into eventual reunification with the mainland.<sup>15</sup> China read these actions as another push in the direction of Taiwanese independence.

Throughout all of the interactions with the mainland, all of Taiwan's political parties, regardless of their policy on reunification, have subscribed to the same five underlying principles that, today, govern Taiwan's external relations. These principles are:

1. Avoid entrapment by the PRC
2. Avoid provoking the PRC
3. Maintain good relation with the United States
4. Affirm the ROC's sovereignty by maintaining formal diplomatic ties with internationally recognized states
5. Strive for international sympathy and strengthen substantive ties with states and non-governmental organizations.<sup>16</sup>

The first principle addresses the mistrust that exists between both the people and the politicians of Taiwan and the CCP. All the parties on Taiwan believe that Beijing's ultimate goal is to bring them under communist rule whether via direct or indirect means. While the second principle seeks to avoid confrontation with the PRC, none of the political parties in Taiwan feel that war should be avoided at all costs. An unconditional surrender to unification is unacceptable unless the people of Taiwan have an identifiable advantage to be gained. The driving reason behind the third principle is security. Politicians and citizens alike recognize their disadvantage

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<sup>15</sup> Shih Ying-ying, "NUC and NUG Cease to Function:Chen," *Taiwan Journal*, 3 Mar 2006, under "Taiwan-China Relations," <http://taiwanjournal.nat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=23214&CtNode=122> (accessed 9 January 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Shelley Rigger, "Party Politics and Taiwan's External Relations," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, Summer 2005, 414-417.

against the Chinese mainland without the United States supporting them and they are not willing to take the chance of losing the U.S. support through their foreign policy decisions with other nations. While the citizens recognize the need to maintain strong ties with the United States, the population of Taiwan is content with the current de facto independence that they operate under. As a result, the main populace of the island will not accept a political party that suggests a strong push in one direction, whether it be toward independence or reunification. The fourth principle is based on the belief that if Taiwan is no longer formally recognized by any UN member states, the Chinese could present the case that Taiwan has no sovereignty. Twenty-four countries currently recognize Taiwan as independent with the most significant being Panama, which signed a Free Trade Agreement with the island in 2003. Since 2000, under President Shui-bian, Taiwan has seen seven countries transition to no longer recognizing Taiwanese sovereignty.<sup>17</sup> The final principle is based on extending relations beyond formal diplomatic ties with a few small countries. The Taiwanese government feels that they must gain the sympathy of international organizations and continue economic and personal ties with larger nations, even if they are not formally recognized diplomatically. Rulers in Taiwan seek every opportunity to participate in any world organization that will allow them access, such as the World Trade Organization.<sup>18</sup> The remaining two principles deal primarily with recognition on the world stage and their ability to be seen as a separate entity from the PRC.

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony Spaeth, "How many countries recognize Taiwan these days?," *Asia Sentinel*, August 7, 2006, under "Countries that recognize Taiwan as independent," [http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=77&Itemid=40](http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=77&Itemid=40) (accessed March 18, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Carter Dougherty, "World Trade Organization welcomes Taiwan as Member," *The Washington Times KnightRidder/Tribune Business News*, November 12, 2001, under "World Organizations with Taiwanese participation," [http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary\\_0286-7291385\\_ITM](http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-7291385_ITM) (accessed March 18, 2008).

Overall, the underlying cause for the continued poor relations between Taipei and Beijing is that neither side is willing to sacrifice its own self interests for the sake of unification. The Taiwanese desire the ability to govern themselves and maintain their government separate of the communist government of mainland China. The CCP desires a complete reunification of the all of China's territories to restore it to the "kingdom" that it once was and refuses to renounce the use of force to do so.



## United States Role in the Region

The United States has played a significant role in the progression of the conflict across the straits and needs to be properly postured to ensure a peaceful resolution is reached. Since the end of World War II, the language and actions of the United States in the region, however, have not always placed it in a position of neutrality with respect to the two sides and, according to the Chinese, the U.S. is the primary reason that Taiwan and the mainland have not been reunited.

Upon completion of World War II, civil war resumed on mainland China between the communist forces led by Mao Tse-tung and the Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek. Due to internal corruption and inflation, the Kuomintang-led government forces were defeated by the communists and forced to retreat to the island of Taiwan in 1949. Taiwan, as a result of the Japanese surrender at the conclusion of World War II, had been returned to the Republic of China in 1945. With the retreat of the Nationalists to the island and the establishment of the People's Republic of China on the mainland in 1949, the government of ROC was re-established on Taiwan and claimed sovereignty over all of mainland China. This position was recognized by the majority of the world and until the 1970s, China's seat on the Security Council of the United Nations was occupied by the Republic of China.

Initially, many in the United States government felt that the island would fall under communist control and become part of the PRC within the first few years.<sup>1</sup> As

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<sup>1</sup> Sidney W. Souers, *A Report to the National Security Council by the Acting Secretary of State on the position of the United States with respect to Formosa* (Washington, October 6, 1949)

a result, President Truman announced in January of 1950 that the United States would not get involved in resolving the issue of governance of Taiwan and would not intervene in the event of an attack by the PRC on the island. The United States' position would quickly change once the Korean War broke out in June of the same year when the president sent the Seventh Fleet to maintain a state of neutrality in the straits and essentially protect Taiwan from invasion by mainland forces. With the growing fear of communism spreading throughout the world, Taiwan became an island of strategic importance to the United States. In a report to the National Security Council on March 24, 1952, the Acting Secretary of Defense quoted the Joint Chiefs of Staff as saying "The denial of Formosa (Taiwan) to communism is of major importance to the United States security interests and is of vital importance to the long term United States position in the Far East."<sup>2</sup> The Joint Chiefs went on to recommend that the U.S. take whatever measures are necessary to protect Formosa from any Chinese regime and take unilateral action to insure availability of the island as a base for military operations. This marked the beginning of a constantly evolving U.S. role in the straits.

Despite the clear intentions of the United States to intervene on behalf of Taiwan in a conflict with the mainland, the PRC began a series of attacks on the islands along the mainland of China in 1954 in an attempt to seize control of the islands and eventually convince Taiwan to reunify. Although nuclear retaliation was one option presented to the president by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, President Eisenhower did not want to involve U.S. troops in the conflict or take the immediate

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<sup>2</sup> William C Foster, *A Report to the National Security Council by the Acting Secretary of Defense on Formosa* (Washington, 24 March 1952)

path of nuclear response. Instead, the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 was signed between the United States and Taiwan authorizing the use of U.S. forces to defend the islands of Taiwan and the Pescadores but did not include the smaller islands off the mainland. This became the first of several key documents that drove the U.S. foreign policy toward Taiwan. Eventually the mainland stopped the bombardment only after the threat of nuclear weapons was made. The conflict resolved none of the issues leading up to it and became known as the first Straits of Taiwan Crisis.

The second Straits of Taiwan Crisis, also known as the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, occurred only three years after the finish of the first. Once again, the PRC began shelling the islands of Quemoy and Matsu resulting in the ROC requesting assistance from the United States. Along with reinforcing protecting supply lines to the island and reinforcing naval units, the United States also outfitted multiple Taiwanese F-86s with AIM-9 sidewinder missiles to provide them with an advantage against the PRC's MiG-15s and MiG-17s.<sup>3</sup> After it became clear that no decisive victory would be reached by either side, a cease-fire was declared after only 44 days. Although the United States' involvement did not yield a victory for the island, it did stress the importance of U.S. units being postured to respond rapidly to PRC hostilities. As will be shown later, crises such as these are primary reasons for the U.S. continuing to maintain bases in Okinawa.

The United States would continue to oppose the PRC in the region and resist the recognition of the government of mainland China until the early 1970s. Upon the recognition that the PRC and the United States shared a common enemy in the Soviet

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<sup>3</sup> Wang Ghi-wu, "Military Preparedness and Security Needs: Perceptions from the Republic of China and Taiwan," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, No. 6, June 1981, 656.

Union and in order to stop the spread of the soviet form of communism, the U.S. recognized it would best be served by normalizing relationships with the government of the People's Republic of China. This alliance, however, would initially come at great cost to the United States' relationship with Taiwan, as it would appear that the government was turning its back on a long time ally.

The Shanghai Communiqué in 1972 was the first of three documents that would provide the basis for the United States' shift in foreign policy regarding the conflict between Taipei and Beijing. Signed in 1972 by President Nixon, the document acknowledged that "all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China." Additionally, the United States goes on to state that it does not challenge the Chinese perspective on the situation and that it reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement. The Chinese stated that the sole government of China was the government of the PRC; Taiwan is a province of China; the liberation of Taiwan is an internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere; and all U.S. forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> With respect to bases and military installations on Taiwan, the U.S. acknowledged the ultimate objective of complete withdrawal and stated that it would slowly decrease its force size on the island as tensions in the area decrease.<sup>5</sup> In the years following the communiqué, the Chinese government set two additional conditions, besides the removal of forces, that would be required for normalization of

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to 1965 the United States presence in Taiwan was limited to advisors, intelligence specialists, and maintenance crews for ships and aircraft. After 1965, the Ching Chuan Kang airfield was enlarged to accommodate KC-135s and B-52s. Overall, the military population on Taiwan at the time of the signing was approximately 10,000 personnel. Allen Whiting, *Taiwan and American Policy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 90.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, Open-file report, U.S. Department of State (Washington D.C. February 28, 1972).

Sino-American relations: termination of official U.S. relations with the ROC and termination of the 1954 U.S.-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty.<sup>6</sup>

Recognizing the significance of the military presence on Taiwan and the strategic importance of the Mutual Defense Treaty, Presidents Nixon and Ford refused to concede to the demands the Chinese made to establish normalization. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for President Carter who signed the second of the three communiqués, known as the Normalization Communiqué. Dated 1 January 1979, this communiqué formally recognized the People's Republic of China as the sole government of the country but also stated that the people of the United States would maintain unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan. Additionally, both sides agreed that neither would seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region or in any other region of the world. The communiqué closed by stating that the United States acknowledged the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China. In the official statement that accompanied the communiqué, the president agreed to terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan and remove all forces from the island.<sup>7</sup>

By the president agreeing to remove forces from Taiwan and terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty, many in Congress saw the United States as turning its back on a long time ally in the region, leaving them to eventually fall under communist rule by the mainland. In order to prevent this from occurring and ensure that the United States maintained some form of relations with Taiwan, Congress drafted the

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<sup>6</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 212

<sup>7</sup> The information in this paragraph was taken from two sources: U.S. Department of State, *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*. Open-file report, U.S. Department of State. (Washington D.C., January 1, 1979) and Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 212

Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in 1979 to replace the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954. Unlike the previous two communiqués which were merely executive agreements that were not passed by Congress, the TRA was a law that legally bound the United States to the terms contained in it. Six statements defined the policy of the United States with respect to Taiwan in the TRA. Specifically, it is the policy of the United States—

1. to preserve and promote extensive, close and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan, as well as the people on the China mainland and all other peoples of the Western Pacific area;

2. to declare that peace and stability in the area are in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States, and are matters of international concern;

3. to make clear that the United States decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means;

4. to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States;

5. to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character; and

6. to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Taiwan Relations Act: Public Law 96-8 96<sup>th</sup> Congress*. Open-file report, U.S. Department of State (Washington D.C., April 10, 1979).

One significant point of contention between the United States and the PRC as a result of the Taiwan Relations Act was the expressed authority to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character. The act went on to further state in non-specific terms the quantity and type of weapons that could be provided. Section 3 of the act states:

3(a) ...the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability;

3(b) The President and the Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services...

3(c) The President is directed to inform the Congress promptly of any threat to the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan...and the President and Congress shall determine appropriate action by the United States in response to any such danger.

Additionally, the TRA established that the president must ensure that the U.S. maintain adequate forces in the Pacific to provide for the defense of Taiwan and that, in the end, the normalization of relations with China is based on their continued attempts to resolve the situation peacefully.

The Taiwan Relations Act would become the United States' governing document when dealing with the government of Taiwan, particularly with respect to arms sales over the next 28 years. Unfortunately, the document did not sit well with the government of mainland China, who failed to recognize it as a binding document. Additionally the document, although some would argue, did not specifically define

what action the United States would take in the defense of Taiwan. Thus began the United States' policy of "strategic ambiguity" in the Taiwan Straits.

Initial Chinese response was minimal due to President Carter's assurance to the Chinese that the arms sales would be minimal and not in violation of the previous two communiqués that had been agreed to between the two countries. That all changed when the Reagan White House took office in 1981 and viewed Taiwan's security as a greater importance than the previous administration. With the threat of increased arms sales to the Taiwanese lurking on the horizon, the Chinese responded with an ultimatum for the new administration: "strategic cooperation with the PRC against the common Soviet threat, or improved U.S. relations with Taiwan."<sup>9</sup> In the end, the fear of the Soviet influence won out and the United States entered into yet another communiqué to define the relationship between the two nations.

The third communiqué that defined the United States policy with China was the Joint Communiqué of 1982. This agreement came as a direct result of the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 that authorized the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive characteristic. The United States agreed to the joint communiqué in an attempt to reassure the Chinese mainland that the U.S. government continued to uphold its previous stance on a "one China" policy. Additionally, the communiqué reiterated that the government viewed the Taiwan situation as a Chinese internal affair that must be resolved peacefully. Until such time that a peaceful resolution could be reached, the United States reassured the Chinese that "it does not seek to carry out a long term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those

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<sup>9</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*: 214



supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it intends gradually to reduce its sale of arms to Taiwan, leading, over a period of time, to a final resolution.”<sup>10</sup> In the official letter that accompanied the communiqué, President Reagan reassured the Chinese that it was in the best interest of the United States to improve relations with the PRC while at the same time continuing to meet its obligations to the people of Taiwan.

In an effort to convince the government of Taiwan that the United States was not turning its back on them, on the eve of issuing the Joint Communiqué of 1982 the United States agreed to a series of “assurances” that proposed how the U.S. would handle dealings with Taiwan. In what became known as the “Six Assurances,” the United States would not:

1. Set a date for termination of arms sales to Taiwan.
2. Alter the terms of the [Taiwan Relations Act](#).
3. Consult with China in advance before making decisions about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.
4. Mediate between Taiwan and China.
5. Alter its position about the sovereignty of Taiwan which was, that the question was one to be decided peacefully by the Chinese themselves, and would not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China.
6. Formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, Open-file report, U.S. Department of State (Washington D.C., 17 August 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Taiwan: Texts of the Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S.-China Communiqués, and the “Six Assurances,”* by Kerry Dumbaugh, Open-file report, Library of Congress (Washington D.C., May 21, 1998): 18.

Throughout the remainder of the Reagan and George H. W. Bush presidencies, the United States maintained its position with respect to the governing documents for both China and Taiwan. Perhaps the lowest point during this period was the imposition of sanctions against the PRC and the suspension of military arms sales following the events that transpired in Tiananmen Square in June of 1989. Throughout the same period, with respect to the Taiwanese, arms sales were approved and continued at a rate that was proportional to rises in inflation and of sufficient nature to counter the Chinese military buildup that was occurring across the straits. One example of this was the agreement to sell 150 F-16s to Taiwan in 1992.<sup>12</sup> The Chinese outrage with the sale was quickly disputed when it was pointed out that the fighters were merely a counter to the Chinese acquisition of Su-27s from the Russians. As for the agreements made with the Chinese in the three communiqués, the U.S. assured the government of Beijing that the arms that were being sold were strictly of a defensive nature and that they continued to stand behind the peaceful resolution to the cross-straits scenario and that they refused to side with one government or the other.

The Clinton Administration's policy toward China and Taiwan began in much the same way that the previous administrations had left off, continuing to stress "one China" but yet upholding the policies called out in the Taiwan Relations Act. Throughout the period since normalization, the PRC had often presented two different approaches as to how they would deal with the United States, one side interested in expanding friendly ties and the other viewing the United States as the enemy. In 1993, the People's Republic of China published a white paper titled 'The Taiwan

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<sup>12</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 220.

Question and the Reunification of China.’ In this paper, the government of China specifically blamed the United States for the “continued division of China.”<sup>13</sup> The paper specifically cited that three obstacles existed to reunification with the third obstacle being “certain foreign forces who do not want to see a reunified China” and “have gone out of their way to meddle in China’s internal affairs.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, during this period, Lieutenant General Mi Zhenyu, the Vice Commandant of the Academy of Military Sciences, Beijing was quoted as having said “[As for the United States] for a relatively long time it will be absolutely necessary that we quietly nurse our sense of vengeance...We must conceal our abilities and bide our time.”<sup>15</sup>

Much like China’s relations with Taiwan, the United States would continue to forge ahead with little progress being made toward either side achieving their goals. Trying to maintain close relations with Taiwan, the administration allowed a visit by President Lee Teng Hui to his alma mater of Cornell in 1995. As previously mentioned, the Chinese viewed this as a poor decision by the United States and vowed for serious consequences. Uncertain of the United States’ commitment in the region, the response came in the form of the series of military exercises and missile tests off the coast of Taiwan just prior to their democratic elections in 1996. As with all previous crises involving the two sides of the straits, the United States quickly came to the defense of Taiwan by sending two aircraft carrier battlegroups into the region ensuring that no further escalation by the Chinese would occur. Again reinforcing the policies stated in the Taiwan Relations Act.

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<sup>13</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 55.

<sup>14</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 3

The events that transpired essentially brought talks to a standstill for the next 2 years. At the end of 1998 talks were scheduled to resume on both sides for all matters except political reunification. While the United States was making a strong push for improved relations, it was made clear that they had no interest in Taiwan simply conceding to China's demands and that there was no desire for a timetable to support reunification.<sup>16</sup> As with several events that had transpired between the three "nations," the administration stated one viewpoint to the Taiwanese and then turned around and supported the PRC's view on the matter when, in April 1998 on a visit to China, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made the statement that would later become the "three noes": that the U.S. does not support Taiwanese independence, that the U.S. does not support a "two China" or "One China, One Taiwan," and that the U.S. does not support Taiwan admission in to world organizations that require statehood. By making these statements, the administration marked a shift in policy toward supporting reunification vice resolution between the two sides. Additionally, as a result of these comments, Congress pushed for the president to have China renounce the use of force.

Two major events occurred in the next two years that significantly strained relations with the PRC. The first was the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999. While most feel it was caused by an intelligence failure, some hardline Chinese feel it was deliberate. The second major event came on April 1, 2001 when an EP-3 surveillance plane over international waters collided with a Chinese F-8 fighter and was forced to make an emergency landing on Hainan Island. This event came at a time when many hardliners in both governments were pushing

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<sup>16</sup> Lee, *Security Implications*, 58.

the leadership of the two nations to take a tougher stance toward one another. The Chinese hardliner position was due, in part to, the proposed sale of multiple Aegis-class destroyers to Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> Following the second incident, President Bush reiterated the United States policy regarding Taiwan in an interview with Charlie Gibson. During the interview he stated that he would use whatever force it took to help Taiwan defend itself and that the Chinese understood that the United States had an obligation to do so.<sup>18</sup>

The United States role in the region has been redirected since the events of September 11, 2001. Up until the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, China was quickly becoming the largest point of concern for the United States. The incidents addressed in the preceding paragraphs indicate the game that has been played between the United States, China, and Taiwan over the last fifty plus years. Since 9/11, both the United States and China have found a new common enemy in the terrorist networks scattered throughout the globe. A new common mission has emerged that can be capitalized on to develop good relations between the two countries. Concern, however, still exists over the transparency of the Chinese military buildup. As long as a potential conflict with Taiwan exists, the Chinese will use it as justification to continue to procure arms beyond the capability of those required for reunification. In *The Coming Conflict with China* the authors address the United States as the source of all evil in China, and from the government's view, the sole remaining reason that the island of Taiwan has not yet been reunited with the

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<sup>17</sup> Kelly Wallace and Mike Chinoy, "U.S. surveillance plane lands in China after collision with fighter," *CNN.com*, April 1, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Richard C. Bush and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other: The Truth about China's Challenge to America*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 108.

mainland.<sup>19</sup> As was seen in 2005 with the release of the Anti-Secession Law, the Chinese may be biding their time until they feel they have an advantage due to the United States' preoccupation in Iraq and Afghanistan and inadequate force structure in the Pacific, to attempt to reclaim the island through force.

Since 1995, the United States' position of "strategic ambiguity" has been replaced by one that can be termed "dual deterrence." While "strategic ambiguity" represented an uncertainty as to how the United States would respond in a China-Taiwan scenario, it left open the possibility that the Chinese would underestimate the U.S. response and Taiwan would overestimate the lengths that the United States would go to defend the island. Through dual deterrence, one source states that the United States now executes their policy on the situation through two key elements – warning and reassurance. With respect to China, the United States warns the mainland not to use force against Taiwan in return for the reassurance that it will not support Taiwan seeking independence from China. Additionally, with respect to Taiwan, the U.S. government warns the Taiwanese against political moves that would provoke the PRC in return for the reassurance that it will not "sell out its (Taiwan's) security and democracy for the sake of good relations with China."<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, for dual deterrence to work, the United States must have the means to back up the policy, an area that is presently in question due to other commitments and a reduced footprint in the region.

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<sup>19</sup> The chapter titled "America is the Enemy" cites several examples that the author uses to show the Chinese underlying view that the United States is the enemy and will eventually lead to confrontation between the two nations. Bernstein and Munro, *Coming Conflict*, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Bush and O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other*, 78

The United States has four key interests with respect to Taiwan which are (1) the maintenance of a favorable balance of power in the Western Pacific; (2) the continuation of Taiwan's positive influence on China's modernization; (3) the preservation of a domestic American political consensus on U.S.-China policy; and (4) Taiwan's role in American credibility in Asia.<sup>21</sup> It is because of the first and fourth interests, as well as President Bush's statements in 2001, that one might conclude the United States will come to the defense of Taiwan in a cross-strait scenario and therefore must be properly postured in the region to facilitate a rapid and decisive response.

The United States has played a significant role in the continuing scenario across the Taiwan Straits since the end of World War II. U.S. involvement in the ongoing conflict has left it with the requirement to ensure that a peaceful conclusion is reached between the two sides and that it takes into account the best interests of the people of Taiwan. The PRC, on the other hand, has repeatedly stated that United States has no role in the matter as the situation is an internal conflict that does not require external powers to get involved. In order to maintain a position of influence over the outcome of the conflict, the United States' perceived military and political power in the region can not be allowed to take a backseat to a rising regional power as it continues to draw down its presence in the region and neglect its allies due to higher priority conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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<sup>21</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 11

## Other Regional Players

### *Japan*

Recent conflicts have shown that seldom will unilateral action be tolerated on the international stage in modern times. In nearly all cases, a coalition or an alliance will be required to take action against a nation, particularly when the action that is being taken is not in response to a direct attack on the lead country's sovereign territory. The United States' role in the ongoing conflict between Taiwan and China has been examined and it is clear that the U.S. has a strong interest in the outcome of the situation and is willing to project its military power into the region to ensure that the eventual endstate is reached via peaceful means. It is also clear that throughout the last fifty years, the government of the People's Republic of China has viewed this conflict as one that is internal to China and one that no outside nation should be involved in. Based on the vast distances that separate the nations of the Pacific and the limited resources available to the United States as it continues to spread its forces thin in Iraq and Afghanistan, what role will the nations of the region be willing to play in preventing military action by China against Taiwan, whether it be with direct military support or logistic support to a primarily U.S. defense of Taiwan? In order to answer this question, the surrounding nations' views of the conflict must be examined as well as their relationships with the United States.

Japan is the primary U.S. military and economic ally in the region and also has the most to lose if China gains control of Taiwan or if Taiwan declares its independence. Over 70% of Japan's oil flows through the South China Sea and



through a series of islands (Spratly and Paracel Islands) in that region whose ownership is disputed amongst several nations.<sup>1</sup> Should China gain control of Taiwan, some speculate that it would only be a matter of time until several of the smaller nations in the region that claim these islands also fall. While the resources could be routed around Indonesia, it would come at a much greater cost and time to the Japanese. Additionally, Japan, the PRC and the ROC have all claimed ownership of the Senkaku and Diaoyu Islands between Taiwan and Japan. An independent Taiwan may potentially make a stronger claim to these islands and result in hostilities between Japan and Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> With respect to these islands, the Chinese reserved the right to use force to reclaim them and in 1995 Japanese fighters were sent to intercept Chinese warplanes operating in the vicinity. While the United States does not take a position on ownership of the Senkakus, the islands are recognized as being “administered by Japan” in the Okinawa reversion documents of 1972.

Based on just these few scenarios, one key question that must be answered regarding the Japanese involvement is “Are they willing to take action against a regional power, in their own “backyard,” over a matter that is considered, by many nations in the region, internal to the Chinese? While the Japanese desire to increase their influence in East Asia, they also see the Chinese intentions in Taiwan and the South China Sea as an indicator of imperialistic intentions by the PRC to regain the “middle kingdom.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua P. Rowan, “The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance, ASEAN, and the South China Sea Dispute,” *Asian Survey*, Volume 45, Issue 3 (2005): p 431.

<sup>2</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 109.

<sup>3</sup> The term “middle kingdom” is based during the Zhou Dynasty in China when the Chinese viewed themselves as the “center of civilization.” “Middle kingdom” is an English translation of the Chinese term “Zhongguo” which also implied political legitimacy. In this text, it refers to the Chinese desire to

The Japanese primary concern, if a war should break out across the Straits of Taiwan and the U.S. does not get involved, is that they would be left to defend themselves from any possible action taken by the Chinese. Knowing that a strong Japan-U.S. alliance exists and that basing rights will be a key factor in the U.S.'s ability to conduct operations in the region, a strong possibility exists that the Chinese would launch an attack on Japanese ports or airfields that the United States could use to launch operations from. Many experts speculate, though, that the Japanese would enter the conflict on the side of the United States because of their strong partnership, particularly from a maritime security standpoint. Should the Japanese fail to side with the U.S in a conflict between Taiwan and China, the risk to the security of their natural resource flow through the South China Sea would be increased exponentially, especially if China secured the sea lanes.<sup>4</sup>

From the Japanese standpoint, they were caught between a “rock and a hard place” when it came to the situation between China and Taiwan. Many of the elites in the government looked at Japan’s security in terms of its economic dealings in the region. From this standpoint, the clear choice for the Japanese to align themselves with would be the PRC. The plus side of this approach was that, because it is economic in nature, it does not preclude them from also conducting financial dealings with the ROC. From the standpoint of their alliance with the United States, however, it was in the Japanese best interest to favor the defense of Taiwan and the Republic of

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re-establish themselves as the “center of civilization.” (Translation taken from Wikipedia using keyword “China”).

<sup>4</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 99-102.

Korea (ROK). Japan officially committed to the defense of Taiwan and the ROK in the 1970s after the United States agreed to the reversion of Okinawa in exchange.<sup>5</sup>

The Japanese situation in the region creates yet another complication for the United States military operating in the region. Under the 1952 Security Treaty, Japan had no right to interfere in U.S. military operations from bases in Japan. This did not sit well with some members of the Japanese opposition that felt that the government was giving a blank check for operations from their mainland. They felt this policy would unnecessarily draw the Japanese into any conflict in the region that involved the United States. As a result, a revision to the U.S. – Japan Treaty in 1960 called for the United States to obtain prior consultation from the Japanese government prior to any major changes were made to the forces or equipment deployed to Japan or prior to the conduct of combat operations for the security of the Far East with the exception of those bases on Okinawa.<sup>6</sup> This action would require Tokyo to acknowledge and concur with U.S. actions in the region as well as potentially take responsibility for any actions launched from their territory.

Eventually, the bases on Okinawa were returned to Japan with the caveat that the United States desired “maximum free conventional use of the military bases [on Okinawa], particularly with respect to Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam.”<sup>7</sup> Another source cites “when the United States agreed to return Okinawa to Japan in 1969, Japan undertook not to hinder the use of U.S. bases there in operations in defense of

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<sup>5</sup> James Auer and Tetsuo Kotani, “Reaffirming the ‘Taiwan Clause’: Japan’s National Interest in the Taiwan Strait and the U.S.-Japan Alliance,” In *Japan-Taiwan Interaction: Implications for the United States*, *NBR Analysis*, Vol. 16, Number 1 (Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005), 63.

<sup>6</sup> Auer and Kotani, “Reaffirming the ‘Taiwan Clause’,” 65.

<sup>7</sup> Auer and Kotani, “Reaffirming the ‘Taiwan Clause’,” 66-67.

South Korea or Taiwan.”<sup>8</sup> The author then goes on to say that with the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States insisted on its right to defend Taiwan and for that reason, the bases in Japan remain vital.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately for the Japanese, the alliance is a double-edged sword. A strong alliance discourages interaction between the PRC and Japan while encouraging increased relations with Taipei. A weak alliance with the United States would encourage greater interaction between Beijing and Tokyo but discourage future relations with Taiwan. Therefore the alliance should be reliable enough to discourage both sides on the Taiwan Strait from unilaterally challenging the status quo. In essence, the only option that the alliance should present is a peaceful resolution of the situation.<sup>10</sup> This alliance should represent the dual deterrence referenced previously.

While it remains unclear what role the Japanese would play in a conflict across the straits, one thing is clear. As part of the U.S. Joint Declaration on the Security Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Japan affirmed that the U.S. military presence in Asia was “essential for preserving peace and stability.”<sup>11</sup> In order to maintain that presence, the United States must continue to foster good relations with its allies and have access to bases from which to provide that security.

## ***Korea***

China’s role on the Korean peninsula in recent years has revolved around two principles, regional stability and promoting the Chinese influence. Their approach to

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<sup>8</sup> John Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System* (London: Athlone Press, 1988): 248, quoted in Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 105-106.

<sup>9</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan’s Security*, 105-106.

<sup>10</sup> Auer and Kotani, “Reaffirming the ‘Taiwan Clause’,” 79.

<sup>11</sup> Bernstein and Munro, *Coming Conflict*, 169.

this has taken the form of, not only engagement with Pyongyang, but also increased dialogue with Seoul and encouragement of improved relations between the two capitals. The prospect of a unified Korean peninsula is appealing to the Chinese not only from an economic perspective but also from the standpoint of removing the mission that has kept the United States in South Korea since the completion of the Cold War.

The role that South Korea would play in a conflict across the straits has become very questionable in the last 15 years. Although high ranking officials in Korea insist that the U.S.-ROK military alliance is strong, there have been indicators since 1992 that a shift is occurring in favor of Beijing. On August 24, 1992 South Korea officially established diplomatic ties with Beijing while at the same time, severing ties with Taipei. Since that time, China has displaced the United States as the major trading partner of South Korea and since 1995 has passed the U.S. in terms as the leading exporter to South Korea.<sup>12</sup> Because of this interdependence on each other for trade and investments, interactions with Beijing now weigh heavily on decisions made by the South Korean government.

From a political standpoint, differences still exist between the two nations but are slowly being resolved, the key one of which is the handling of North Korean refugees. China and South Korea share a common interest in keeping North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, first from the standpoint of proliferation of the technology and second from the standpoint of a nuclear armed neighbor with a potentially unstable government. Because of this common interest and China's role

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<sup>12</sup> Congressional Research Service, *The Rise of China and Its Effect on Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea: U.S. Policy Choices*, by Dick K. Nanto and Emma Chanlett-Avery, Open-file report, Library of Congress (Washington D.C., January 13, 2006): 5

in the six party talks, the government in Beijing has gained significant favor with politicians in South Korea. Along with the nuclear concern from North Korea, other actions by Pyongyang may be driving Taiwan further from reunification with the mainland. Specifically, the testing of a Taepodong missile in 1998 led to discussions of a sea-based Theater Missile Defense between Japan and the U.S.. This TMD had the potential to cover Taiwan which would further facilitate Taiwan's quest for independence from China.<sup>13</sup> In addition to their concerns over the actions of North Korea, the two governments share a common interest in their lack of desire to see Japan assume a more forward defensive posture in the region as well as making the means available for South Korea to assume the role of "stabilizer for peace and prosperity in the region. Both sides continue to strive for mutual cooperation in the security and military arenas, agreeing to annual discussions aimed at cooperative engagements started in 1999.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the gains that have been made in relations with China, the South Korean government is concerned how these relations will translate into the future. With the Chinese inevitably becoming a major military power not only in the region but also in the world, the ROK government questions how this power will translate into relations with regional allies.

While the China-ROK relationship appeared to be blossoming, relations with the United States showed signs of declining. The election of Roh Moo-Hyun of the Uri Party to the presidency in 2004, coupled with a growing anti-American sentiment, was the driving force behind the divergence of South Korea and the United States in

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<sup>13</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 107.

<sup>14</sup> Nanto and Chanlett-Avery, *Rise of China*, 24-28.

recent years. Despite public opinion polls that have showed consistent support for the U.S.-ROK alliance and the U.S. military presence, the numbers have fluctuated significantly with the perceived external threat. Additionally, some of the sentiment stems from the perception that the Koreans are “second rate citizens” with respect to the United States and that because of the alliance, the country has no means to control its own destiny, particularly in relations with North Korea.<sup>15</sup>

Since the end of the Korean War the United States has maintained a strong military presence on the peninsula. Although initially the presence was used as a deterrence to prevent the spread of communism from the north or, if that should fail, to act as an initial military response, little utility for that mission still exists. A recent article titled “The New Line in the Pacific” states that three reasons exist for the discontinuance of the mission on the Korean peninsula: South Korea can defend itself against North Korea, the U.S. must have the flexibility to send troops where they are most needed and, many South Koreans have become anti-American.<sup>16</sup> The decision to stay or go will play a large role in the support that the U.S. can expect from the South Koreans in any future conflicts in the region.

Another aspect that should be examined regarding the involvement of South Korea is the role the Chinese would play if a conflict broke out on the peninsula. Some feel that the Korean peninsula could be used as a bargaining chip in the exchange between Taiwan and China. In the event that North Korea takes offensive military action against the south, the Chinese may vow to remain on the sidelines as

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<sup>15</sup> Eric V. Larson, Norman D Levin, Seonhae Baik, and Bogdan Savych, *Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes Toward the U.S.*, RAND Technical Report, March 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Halloran, “The New Line in the Pacific,” *Air Force Magazine*, December 2007, <http://www.afa.org/magazine/dec2007/1207pacific.html> (accessed January 20, 2008)

the joint U.S.-ROK forces retaliate, provided that the United States agree to return the favor with respect to a Chinese attempt to regain Taiwan.

The uncertainty over the role that South Korea would play in assisting the United States in a conflict across the straits is very similar to the situation that the U.S. faces with Japan. President Roh Moo-Hyun suggested that his country would take no part in a Taiwan conflict particularly due to their close proximity to China and the potential long term implications of siding with the United States should the results not turn out favorably for the U.S.. Additionally, he has made public statements to the affect that the he would oppose any American presumption that it could use bases in Korea for purposes beyond the peninsula without Seoul's full participation in decision making.<sup>17</sup> Despite the Koreans being one of the United States' strongest allies, particularly in the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, these statements combined with their increased relations with the Chinese leave one to speculate whether the United States could count on them in a regional crisis.

### ***ASEAN, Australia, and India***

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) could also play a substantial role in the outcome of a crisis involving the United States in the region. According to one author, "The reduced U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific, combined with conflicting claims over the South China Sea islands, were the principal factors that contributed to the development of the regional security dialogue in ASEAN."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Bush and O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other*, 150.

<sup>18</sup> Wortzel, Larry M, *The ASEAN Regional Forum: Asian Security Without an American Umbrella*, (Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, December 13, 1996), p. 15.



While the majority of the nations that make up the association see no direct link between the crisis across the Straits of Taiwan and their own security, they are likely to be sought out for assistance by the United States should the U.S. become involved, thereby directly impacting their future security in the area. From the Chinese standpoint, these nations play a different role, one similar to Sudetenland's role with Nazi Germany in 1938.<sup>19</sup> Since the majority of these nations side with the Chinese in their belief that the only interest that the United States has in Taiwan is to keep the Chinese empire divided and that Taiwan is an internal affair, they are likely to acquiesce in China's use of force to regain control of the island. Ultimately, the Chinese hope that the United States will not see the utility in defending Taiwan if its own neighbors don't care about Taiwan's independence.<sup>20</sup>

China has taken an expanded role in dealing with the countries involved in ASEAN and as of recently have sought out mutually beneficial solutions to several areas that were disputed. One area that the Chinese have engaged the countries of Southeast Asia is natural resource procurement in the South China Sea. By subscribing to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, China showed a willingness to work with the other nations that surround the South China Sea to resolve disputes regarding possession of such disputed areas as the Spratly Islands, claimed by Taiwan, China, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brunei. Additionally, China entered into the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the

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<sup>19</sup> This is referring to the Munich Agreement on September 30, 1938 when Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany agreed to the succession of Western Czechoslovakia to Hitler's Germany without consulting the Czech government. In this case, the Chinese feel that they may be able to persuade the ASEAN nations to hand Taiwan over to China in an attempt to prevent the escalation of conflict in the region.

<sup>20</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 110-111.

South China Sea in 2002, promising to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, and pledging to explore or undertake cooperative activities in the South China Sea.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond the disputed territories in the South China Sea, China has engaged in multiple other agreements with the countries that make up ASEAN to expand their security and economic growth, showing clear signs of a willingness to engage their neighbors, some feel in a an effort to drive the U.S. out of the region. In November 2002, the Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues was adopted, which initiated full cooperation between ASEAN and China in the field of non-traditional security issues and listed the priority and form of cooperation. As to multilateral and bilateral cooperation, it aims to “strengthen information exchange, strengthen personnel exchange and training and enhance capacity building, strengthen practical cooperation on non-traditional security issues, strengthen joint research on non-traditional security issues, and explore other areas and modalities of cooperation”<sup>22</sup>

The relationships that are being developed between China and these nations will play a key role in a conflict in the region, as several of these countries may be called upon by the United States to assist in preventing Taiwan from falling under Chinese control. For example, the United States considers Singapore and the Philippines as potential sites for forward operating bases in future regional conflicts. The relationship that these nations are developing with China may create a conflict of

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<sup>21</sup> Bernstein and Munro, *Coming Conflict*, 45.

<sup>22</sup> See Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues, Sixth ASEAN-China Summit, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 4 November 2002, <http://www.aseansec.org/13185.htm> (accessed 14 October 2007).

interests when called upon to choose sides, especially when they consider the Taiwan issue an internal affair. From the standpoint of the Philippines, they may be more hesitant to assist the U.S. in this crisis based on the fact that the U.S. has made it clear that its defense agreement with the Philippines does not include helping Manila fight over disputed island chains in the South China Seas. Additionally, by asking the United States to leave all of their major bases in the Philippines in 1991, the government of Manila essentially opened the South China Sea for Chinese occupation.

In an effort to counter the Chinese presence in the region and show that the United States has not forgotten about her friends, the United States and ASEAN launched the U.S.-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership initiative in November 2005 to “foster cooperation.” While the initial focus of the initiative was to counter terrorism in the region, its focus expanded into political, security, economical, educational, and social cooperation.<sup>23</sup> But this effort may have been too little, too late, as some cite that the United States turned all of her attention to fighting terrorism after 9/11 and neglected her allies in the Pacific.<sup>24</sup>

While some speculate that the United States may be losing ground with its Southeast Asian allies in an evolving China-Taiwan scenario as a result of a rapidly growing China, there are still multiple countries in the region that the U.S. could turn to for potential assistance with respect to China. It is with these countries that the U.S. must foster a relationship that will allow it to depend on them if called upon to

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<sup>23</sup> Congressional Research Service, *U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationships in the Asia-Pacific Region*, by Bruce Vaughn, Open-file report, Library of Congress (Washington D.C., 22 January 2007): 9.

<sup>24</sup> Vaughn, *U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationships*, 15.

react to Chinese hostilities. While China is rapidly becoming a major economic partner with Australia, she has long been a loyal ally and is very interested in keeping the Chinese out of the South China Sea. In 1995 the Australians entered into a strategic alignment with Indonesia to prevent Chinese influence from overtaking the smaller nations with claims to the resources present in the South China Sea<sup>25</sup> Indonesia also has the potential to become a key ally in the region but has grown concerned about the anti-Islamic rhetoric following 9/11. Recently, many analysts see increased engagement with India as a means of providing a counter weight to China in the region by supporting India's rise as a regional power. One downside of this alliance is that many in India are unwilling to play a subordinate role to the United States and see themselves as a full power in the region.<sup>26</sup>

In a world that is constantly evolving, at no one time can the United States rely on past allies in a conflict that some view as a carryover of a civil war. As the United States military, and more importantly, the other elements of its national power turn inward or toward fighting a war in Iraq, U.S. presence in Asia will be questioned and ultimately may be revoked. To possess the capability to function at great distances from its main supply hubs, the United States must have access to ports and airfields of nations that have been neglected in recent years.

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<sup>25</sup> Lasater and Kien-hong Yu, *Taiwan's Security*, 112.

<sup>26</sup> Vaughn, *U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationships*, 9.

## Force Structuring

The previous chapters have defined the most likely scenario that faces the U.S. military in the future outside of combating terrorism. Unfortunately, many feel that the United States has turned all of its attention to fighting the war on terrorism and neglected to see the problem that is lurking just around the corner in the Pacific. As the U.S. focuses on fighting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, its military is evolving to become lighter and more expeditionary in nature as well as reduce its footprint worldwide. Is the United States, once again, preparing for the war it is currently fighting or does its plan for the future take into account a new potential superpower?

China is recognized in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) as having “the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages absent U.S. counter strategies.”<sup>1</sup> The Chinese military buildup in recent years has focused on the acquisition of multiple high tech systems and platforms whose capabilities go beyond the stated Chinese intentions of internal defense with no hegemonic goals. Additionally, the capabilities that these assets provide will eventually allow the Chinese to unify Taiwan with force even if the United States gets involved. These systems include Anti-Satellite missile systems, ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced integrated air defense systems, next generation torpedoes, advanced diesel and nuclear powered submarines, to include a new class of SSBN, and strategic nuclear strike from land or sea based systems. When these capabilities

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Open-file report, U.S. Department of Defense (Washington D.C., February 6, 2006).

are coupled with the vast distances of the Asian theater and the ongoing political disputes previously mentioned, the need for the United States to be capable of “sustained operations at great distances into denied areas” becomes obvious.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the enemies the United States faces in today’s war on terrorism and the forecasted future, the QDR calls for a reorientation of forces from “dependence on large, permanent overseas garrisons toward expeditionary operations utilizing more austere bases abroad” and “from focusing primarily on traditional combat operations toward greater capability to deal with asymmetric challenges.” One source defined potential reasons for the realignment of the basing structure as;

1. The current structure was developed to defend against a largely static and predictable enemy.
2. Today’s threats are dynamic and unpredictable and demand flexibility
3. Flexible basing will promote adaptability in a world of diverse political, strategic, and diplomatic interests
4. America’s commitment to regional stability can no longer be measured by manpower alone,<sup>3</sup> and
5. More efficient global basing infrastructure will free manpower resources and help alleviate personnel strains.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the reasons listed above, the Department of Defense established Force Realignment deals with South Korea and Japan. In the case of South Korea,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Historically, the United States showed its commitment to a certain region by stationing large numbers of U.S. troops in the region with bases supported by a large infrastructure. Today, with the expeditionary nature of the U.S. military, troop levels like post-World War II are no longer required to demonstrate commitment to a region.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Spencer, “Principles for Restructuring America’s Global Military Infrastructure,” *The Heritage Foundation*, Web Memo #554 (August 16, 2004): 1, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/wm554.cfm> (accessed 4 December 2007)

the proposed force realignment decreased troop levels on the peninsula to 25,000 at the end of 2007 and will leave only a small residual force by 2017. In addition to the decrease in troop size, the ground forces will reposition further south to a new base being built near Osan Air Base and the Combined Forces Command will disappear by 2012 as the Koreans take over full control of their forces in both peace and war. To reiterate the reasons listed in Chapter 3 for the restructuring of forces on the Korean peninsula:

1. South Korea can defend itself against North Korea.
2. The U.S. must have the flexibility to send troops where they are needed most.
3. Many South Koreans have become anti-American.

All three reasons listed may have some validity if the sole purpose of U.S. basing in Korea were to defend the South Koreans against an invasion from the North. While the defined mission on the Korean peninsula has not changed, the area in which that mission is being executed has. With the South Koreans capable of defending themselves from the north, the United States military presence in the country is now more about maintaining stability throughout the region and not just the Korean Peninsula. Unfortunately, events in recent years coupled with a government that saw decreasing utility in the alliance may be the driving causes for the anti-American sentiment and the projected drawdown in U.S. presence.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A RAND Technical Report titled “Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes Toward the U.S.” shows that the majority of South Koreans polled have a favorable opinion of the United States and of the alliance. The majority of the data was taken prior to 2003 and the pro-unification presidency of Roh Moo-hyun. It was during the time period of 2001 until present that the alliance seemed to suffer the most and the plans were set in motion to draw down the troop levels on the peninsula. This time period corresponded with the pro-unification left leaning government in South Korea.

The same type of transformation is occurring on Japan as a Force Realignment Deal with the Japanese government has 8,000 of the 18,000 Marines stationed on Okinawa moving to Guam between 2014 and 2015. Additionally, significant downsizing of the Kadena Air Base and relocation of the Futenma Air Base will occur as part of the deal. The Japanese bases, much like those on the Korean peninsula, are vital to maintaining peace and stability in the region and are a sign of the United States' long standing commitment to such. Additionally, in the same light as the bases in Korea, the acceptance level of the U.S. military presence on the Japanese islands tends to sway with political parties in power and current events but the general feeling is that the population in Japan, and particularly on Okinawa no longer feel the need for such a large U.S. presence.

Coupled with the downsizing of the base structure on Korea and Japan, the 2006 QDR called for creating a "future joint force that will increasingly use host-nation facilities with only a modest supporting U.S. presence." The purpose of this shift in focus is to take the United States from the era of large Main Operating Bases, that require a large infrastructure to support and maintain, to smaller Forward Operating Sites (FOS) and Cooperative Security Locations (CSL). These would be run by much smaller numbers of U.S. forces on a deployment type rotation (FOS) or host nation personnel with periodic U.S. inspections (CSL). These bases would be able to be scaled up or down to support the type of mission that they would be used for and may or may not be required to be maintained open continuously. A shift, once again, driven by the type of enemy that the United States faces in the war on terror and the conduct of missions other than war (MOOTW). An additional reason



for the realignment is to seek the permission of host countries with more permissive environmental regulations and fewer restraints in order to ‘support greater operational flexibility’ and ‘maximize’ the freedom of U.S. forces.<sup>6</sup>

One way in which the U.S. military is compensating for the shift away from a large force presence in Japan and Korea is by increasing the capabilities and size of the Navy and Air Force at its bases located throughout the Pacific. Specifically, the new strategy in the Pacific calls for increased capabilities from Hawaii, Guam, and Alaska. Increased maritime presence in the PACOM AOR, to include at least six operationally available and sustainable aircraft carriers, Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) and 60% of the submarine force, are ways in which the U.S. intends to counter the decrease in its forward footprint. Additionally, the replacement of the conventional USS KITTY HAWK by the nuclear powered USS GEORGE WASHINGTON in Yokosuka, Japan will increase the forward deployed naval capabilities. From an Air Force perspective, long range bombers flying sorties out of Guam, Hawaii, and Alaska coupled with additional airpower from Singapore, Australia, and Diego Garcia will provide the bulk of the United States’ airpower in the Pacific.<sup>7</sup>

While the United States will maintain some ground forces in Korea and Japan for the near future, its long term ground capabilities will come from mobile, self sustaining Brigade Combat Teams stationed in Hawaii and Alaska, a long distance from Taiwan. Based on this force structure, does the military have a plan in place to allow it to respond in time to prevent China from taking Taiwan by force? Worse yet,

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<sup>6</sup> Zdzislaw Lachowski, “Foreign Military Bases in Eurasia,” SIPRI Policy Paper No.18, June 2007, 13-14

<sup>7</sup> Richard Halloran, “The New Line in the Pacific,” *Air Force Magazine*, December 2007

does it even have the assets to provide adequate airlift and sealift capability to move sufficient forces as would be required to combat the growing Chinese threat?

One answer to the logistics question may be the use of sea-basing to counter political anti-access and the lack of forward bases in the region. The concept would allow for the logistics and command and control of U.S. joint forces to be shifted to seaborne assets for sustained operations. One potential problem is the cruise missiles that the Chinese have acquired are designed to neutralize naval vessels at greater distances. The volume of these types of missiles that are being employed in the coastal region will create a significant problem to naval vessels operating in the area. These missiles combined with a rapidly growing Chinese submarine force may essentially prevent access to the region by the navy and hinder seaborne supply lines. Although it is anticipated that a conflict between Taiwan and China will essentially be Navy and Air Force-centric, should the United States choose to defend Taiwan, the type of fight that the Chinese are preparing for make it essential that the U.S. have access to some form of basing capability in the region.

The dilemma that faces the United States, should it continue to decrease its footprint in the Pacific, plays directly into the Chinese hands. The Chinese view the United States as having an exploitable weakness in logistics limitations. This view stems from the time and resources that were required for the coalition buildup prior to the defense of Kuwait in 1991. From the Chinese perspective, what should have been a “half war” for the United States required a significant portion of America’s conventional weapons, required the call-up of reserves, required nearly six months to preposition the force that would be required, and had to hire out a large portion of the

transport requirements to civilian entities. Based on the requirements for that war alone, the Chinese have significant doubts if the U.S. would have the strategic lift capabilities to support a conflict in the Pacific while engaged in two other conflicts.<sup>8</sup> This would be compounded by a lack of prepositioned troops and supplies at forward operating bases.

The Chinese also recognize the weakness with the United States' reliance on forming coalitions and alliances. With any alliance come national caveats that limit the role that a given nation can play in the conflict. Apart from the role that the nation can play in the conflict itself, some coalition/alliance nations will allow only certain actions to be conducted from their soil. One example of this would be the approval of certain types of aircraft missions by the government of Great Britain during the war in Kosovo. Additionally, different political ideologies, weapon systems, languages, cultures, and command and control problems cause increased friction that would not be present in unilateral action. Unfortunately, as mentioned throughout, unilateral action by the United States in a war for the reunification of Taiwan would not play out well on the world stage.<sup>9</sup>

The need for forward basing and strong alliances has not gone unnoticed by the military leadership. In 2003, then U.S. Pacific Command chief Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, stated, "Power projection and contingency response in Southeast Asia in the future will depend on this network of U.S. access in areas with little or no permanent

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions: The Implications for DOD*, Prepared for the Office of Net Assessment, (January 1998): 14-19

<sup>9</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, January 2000).

American basing structure."<sup>10</sup> Additionally, in a hearing of U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on June 26, 2003, Admiral Fargo also stated "Lack of forward operating bases or cooperative allies greatly limits the range of U.S. military responses..."<sup>11</sup>

In that same speech, Admiral Fargo addressed engagement with regional nations, an issue that would be vital to any future success the United States would like to have in the Pacific and more specifically, in a conflict across the straits of Taiwan. Admiral Fargo stated, "The habitual relationships built through exercises and training...is our biggest guarantor of access in time of need." He said: "Access over time can develop into habitual use of certain facilities by deployed U.S. forces with the eventual goal of being guaranteed use in a crisis, or permission to preposition logistics stocks and other critical material in strategic forward locations."<sup>12</sup> Engagement in the region is listed as one of the six critical elements for future Pacific realignment.<sup>13</sup> In a recent interview with current PACOM Commander, Admiral Tim Keating stated that due to the strain on his forces as a result of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, he has insufficient forces for engagement thereby "hamstringing their

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Under Secretary of Defense (Policy), 1999 Summer Study Final Report, "Asia 2025" Organized by the Advisor to the Secretary of Defense for Net Assessment, 25 July to 4 August 1999, Newport Rhode Island, [http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/reading\\_room/967.pdf](http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/reading_room/967.pdf) (Accessed June 12, 2007): 76.

<sup>11</sup> Admiral Thomas Fargo, transcript of hearing of US House of Representatives Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, June 26, 2003. <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2003/June/20030627103342esrom0.374859.html> (accessed February 29, 2008)

<sup>12</sup> Admiral Thomas Fargo, transcript of hearing of US House of Representatives Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, June 26, 2003. <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2003/June/20030627103342esrom0.374859.html> (accessed February 29, 2008)

<sup>13</sup> Richard Halloran, "The New Line in the Pacific," *Air Force Magazine*, December 2007.

ability to conduct exercises and forge alliances with foreign nations that one day could prove instrumental.”<sup>14</sup>

Others have recognized the issues that will face the PACOM Commander if the U.S. continues down the path of base realignment throughout the globe and more importantly, in the Pacific. In one article, the author noted that in a speech given by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld in June of 2005, he said that “an increased reliance on pre-positioned equipment and forces that move to forward operating sites on a temporary basis, but did not explain the anticipated mix between these forces and permanently stationed forces, or what the department would need for airlift and sealift to sustain this approach.”<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the paper noted that the Commission on Review of the Overseas Military Facility Basing “expressed concern that current and projected strategic airlift and strategic sealift were inadequate for the Defense Department’s concept” and “sufficient prepositioned supply stocks do not now exist.”<sup>16</sup>

The logistics issues of the reduction of the bases were not the only issue raised in the document. Concerns about the level of engagement by DoD with other members of the national security interagency were also addressed. Some were concerned that the speed of the planned reduction in bases did not support an integrated State Department plan to engage potential allies with exercises, exchanges, and political and diplomatic influence. This shortcoming in the plan links directly

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<sup>14</sup> Bryan Bender, “Fewer Pacific Forces Ready to Respond,” *Boston Globe*, 27 February 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Congressional Research Service, *U.S. Military Overseas Basing: New Developments and Oversight Issues for Congress*, by Robert Critchlow, Open-file report, Library of Congress (Washington D.C., October 31, 2005): 5.

<sup>16</sup> Critchlow, *U.S. Military Overseas Basing*, 6.

back to the PACOM Commander's concern about inadequate engagement to form the alliances that will be required in the Pacific.

As the United States' force structure and the Chinese military buildup continue to evolve in the Pacific, significant issues will be uncovered that will leave the U.S. military in a position of vulnerability with respect to the defense of Taiwan or any other interest in the region. The Chinese military buildup clearly has an end state in mind that does not involve the United States as a regional power in the Western Pacific. As China continues to build up their anti-access capabilities, the United States reduces its presence in the area and shifts its focus to an enemy that has no boundaries and requires smaller, lighter, more expeditionary forces. As the United States focuses on terrorists world-wide, it neglects engagement with countries such as those that make up the Association of South East Asian Nations, the same nations it plans to launch operations from if a crisis develops across the Straits of Taiwan.

## Current Political Environment

The political environment in the Western Pacific will play a large role in the future force posture of the U.S. military and the likelihood of conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan. Recently, the United States has become much more dependent on the PRC. Besides the astronomical economic interdependence of the two countries, the U.S. has come to realize the role that China will need to play in the ongoing six party talks between the United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, China, and North Korea over the denuclearization of North Korea. China has a significant influence over the government of Pyongyang and has no desire to see a nuclear armed neighbor with an unstable government. Additionally, the United States and China share a common concern regarding the spread of terrorism.

While there are areas for engagement, the fact remains that China desires to be the sole power in the region and ultimately for the United States to no longer have access to that part of the world. Since the end of the World War II and the Korean War, the United States has been the sole superpower in the region with no near peer competitor for military supremacy. The stability in the region was left to the United States military and the U.S. taxpayers as the countries of the Western Pacific were allowed to focus on rebuilding their economies and eventually their militaries.<sup>1</sup>

While the Chinese leadership recently announced that democratic and administrative reforms would be implemented incrementally, there is still no sign of a peaceful resolution with a democratic Taiwan. It may only be a matter of time until the PRC realizes that by systematically making democratic reforms, they are violating

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<sup>1</sup> Bernstein and Munro, *Coming Conflict*, 31.

one of their own principles that justify the use of force against Taiwan: Taipei's strategy of peaceful evolution endangering Beijing's existence. Once the government realizes that they are slowly setting the conditions for reunification on Taiwan's terms, will they resort to the use of force to save the Communist regime in China? The shift toward democratic reform however, has still not led the government of China to renounce the use of force when dealing with Taiwan.

As China's influence in the region rises and they continue to foster mutual engagement with their neighbors, the United States remains focused on combating terrorism worldwide while minimizing the level of diplomacy required to maintain strong allies in the Western Pacific as well as other regions of the world. An undermanned and under-resourced State Department that was left out of the initial planning regarding the closing of key military outposts overseas will be unable to compensate for the diplomacy required to establish the relationships that will be needed to utilize smaller, more austere bases in countries not previously used.

The effects of globalization are allowing nations in the Western Pacific to grow economically and develop stronger ties with other growing economies. As their power in the global market grows, these countries will seek equality in dealing with the United States and may no longer need what the U.S. has to offer. They will seek to become peers with the United States and no longer desire to align themselves with the principles that the U.S. stands for in the region, especially when it goes against their economic partners.

The future of United States bases in Japan and Korea fluctuates with ruling party changes and public opinion in those nations. The initial force restructuring deal



in Korea came during the rule of the pro-North Korean Uri party, a party known for their lack of support to the U.S.-ROK alliance. Consistent polling since 1998 has shown public support for both the United States and for the alliance. While that support has fluctuated based on current events, overall it has remained strong. With the recent election of Lee Myung-bak and his assumption of the office of president on 25 February, 2008, there is speculation that the government's attitude toward the alliance will change and the reduction in troops will no longer be desired. The Grand National Party, which Myung-bak represents, has long been supporters of the alliance and desires a restoration of better relations with the United States based on a free market economy.<sup>2</sup> This renewed relationship may allow for the retention of some of the forces that are being drawn down on the peninsula. While the current South Korean government recognizes the importance of the alliance with respect to stability on the peninsula, they also recognize the impact that it has had on maintaining the stability in the region since the end of the Korean War. Recent interactions between the governments of North and South Korea have begun to open the door toward reunification of the peninsula. While the newly elected government is much more hard-lined with respect to the North, a reunified Korea would suit the Chinese well. The people of South Korea may no longer see a need for the alliance with the United States and therefore, no longer a need for the military presence. Bradford Dismukes of the Center for Naval Analyses stated in the mid 1990s:

Many feel that the reason for the existence of military forces is purely and simply to fight and so logically focus on crisis response and war. There is no question that overseas forces must possess genuine combat capabilities,

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<sup>2</sup> The intent of this section was not to perform a quantitative analysis of Korean support to U.S. presence. Significant supporting data can be found in the RAND Technical Report titled "Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes Toward the U.S."

and these must be used successfully when needed. The greatest utility of the armed forces in the new era, however, lies in three other strategic functions that are at the heart of overseas presence: deter adversaries; make common cause with friends on behalf of security; provide stable conditions so that the U.S. and the world economies can flourish, and inhibit the development of trade restrictions that limit both. The first, to deter is the leading purpose of presence. Deterrence also reassures allies, a major benefit in its own right.<sup>3</sup>

The alliance with Japan remains strong and appears to be growing stronger, especially with China's increase in military spending. While the general public in the areas of the U.S. bases desire the downsizing or moving of the bases, the government remains committed to the alliance. However, much like in the United States, the government must react to the desire of their people. The movement of 8,000 Marines and the relocation of the Marine bases on Okinawa are, in large part, a result of public dissent toward the United States presence on the island. In a report published by the Institute for Defense Analysis, Michael O'Hanlon is cited as saying:

Recent polls showed more than 80 percent of all Japanese consider the Okinawa arrangement undesirable and unfair to local citizens. By trying to hold on to all of its bases in Japan, the United States risks causing a backlash and ultimately losing everything, including those facilities with the greatest military benefit for crises in Korea, the Taiwan Strait, or elsewhere—notably, the Kadena Air Force base on Okinawa and U.S. Navy and Air Force facilities on Japan's main islands.”<sup>4</sup>

One additional downside of the U.S.-Japanese relationship is the United States' recent tendency toward engagement with Pyongyang over their nuclear weapons program. The Japan Times cites that relations between the two nations are drifting apart because the United States is prepared to remove North Korea from the state sponsors of terrorism list in exchange for their progress on denuclearization.

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<sup>3</sup> James Thomason, “Transforming US Overseas Military Presence: Evidence and Options for DOD,” *Institute for Defense Analysis Paper P-3707*, July 2002, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Thomason, “Transforming US Overseas Military Presence,” 10.

This move is looked upon unfavorably by the government in Tokyo due to Pyongyang's abduction of Japanese citizens.<sup>5</sup> The impact that this will have on relations with the two nations remains to be seen but will depend largely on the governments that are in power in both nations and their willingness to come to a compromise.

The party that controls the government in Taipei has equal influence to that of Beijing in the evolution of the conflict across the straits. As mentioned in the chapter titled "History of the Conflict," none of the political parties are in favor of reunification with China if it means they will become part of the communist system. Prior to the presidential election on March 22, 2008, the government under President Chen Shui-bian was pushing for UN referendums that proposed Taiwan re-enter the United Nations under the name of "Taiwan", vice one associated with the PRC. Recognizing the implications that this would have with both the United States and China, members of both the opposition party and Shui-bian's own party asked him to reconsider. Both parties recognized any step toward independence may result in conflict with the mainland.

The U.S. government has recognized the impact that the Chinese are having in the region and are attempting to form new alliances as well as "shore up" those that already exist. One such alliance that the administration is focusing on is India as mentioned in the chapter "Other Regional Players." While this alliance may provide some additional political support in the region, based on distance from the straits, it will provide little in the means of logistical support for a conflict in the region.

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<sup>5</sup> Takehiko Kajita, "U.S. policy toward Pyongyang looks to test Japan relation," *The Japan Times*, January 1, 2008, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20080101f3.html> (accessed January 20, 2008).

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

While a crisis in the Straits of Taiwan may not be the immediate threat to national security, it does pose the greatest potential for a large-scale conflict between near-peer nation-states in the future. As the Chinese continue to grow both militarily and economically, the United States will slowly be shut out of Asia if it continues down its current path. The decrease of the United States military footprint in the Pacific coupled with an inadequate force structure to support the strategic sealift and strategic airlift that would be required to defend Taiwan, should China resort to force, is leaving the U.S. more dependent on its allies than ever before. The reliance on allies will become more relevant as China continues to build up its anti-access and air capabilities, effectively negating the United States' plan for the use of long-range bombers and sea-basing while exploiting the United States' logistical weaknesses.

Many in the region feel that they have been neglected by the United States since the war on terror began. In order to regain their alliance and ultimately their assistance, the United States must be willing to look beyond the war on terror and engage these nations in the diplomacy and military exchanges and exercises that were initially proposed when the realignment of the bases was initially proposed. In order to accomplish the diplomacy piece, the pace at which the restructuring is being proposed must be slowed down. This will provide the Department of State and Department of Defense to develop a joint plan for engagement at all levels. This is essential if the United States is to counter the economic and military influence of the Chinese in the region.

The conflict between Taiwan and China must remain in a status quo until a peaceful resolution can be met. While slow, the evolving political system on the mainland must be allowed adequate time to make the transition to democracy. This will involve the U.S. providing adequate pressure to the Taiwanese government to not push for independence in the near future. By the United States maintaining a position of “dual deterrence,” the status quo will be maintained until China realizes that United States has lost its position of strength in the Pacific.

China desires to remove the American presence from the region and become the sole regional power. The first step in obtaining their goal is to reunify the island of Taiwan with the mainland. In order to prevent this, the United States must have the forces available and in position to defend the democratic way of life. Based on the decreased footprint, U.S. allies must be willing to come to its assistance and be ready to provide the capabilities and logistical support that would be required to defend Taiwan and maintain stability in the region. A re-examination of the proposed basing plan, a decrease in the rate of the troop re-alignment until the reassessment can be completed, a close examination of the required airlift and sealift capabilities, and increased engagement with allies must all occur if the United States is to counter the Chinese threat in the region. Should it continue down its current path, the United States presence in the region will be replaced by a new military power and its interests will no longer be secure.

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## Vita

Lieutenant Commander Michael Majewski enlisted in the United States Navy in 1991 and was granted an appointment to the United States Naval Academy, graduating in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering. He completed the Naval Nuclear Power training pipeline in 1997 and reported to his first sea duty assignment onboard the USS TUCSON (SSN 770) in October of the same year. While assigned to the TUCSON he deployed to the Western Pacific twice and served as the Chemical and Radiological Controls Assistant, Main Propulsion Assistant, Communications Officer, and Quality Assurance Officer. In December 2000, LCDR Majewski reported to the Pennsylvania State University Naval Reserve Officer Training Corp to serve as an Assistant Professor of Naval Science. While assigned to Penn State, he earned a Masters of Science in Mechanical Engineering. From June until November 2003 LCDR Majewski attended Submarine Officer Advanced Course (SOAC) where he was awarded the L.Y. Spear Award, presented to the class honorman. Following SOAC, he reported to the USS NEWPORT NEWS (SSN 750) where he served as the Combat Systems Officer until April 2006. During his time onboard the NEWPORT NEWS, LCDR Majewski completed one deployment to the Northern Atlantic Ocean and Persian Gulf. Upon completion of his department head tour, he reported to the COMSUBLANT Tactical Readiness Evaluation Team where he served in the role of a submarine inspector for tactical readiness.

He is married to the former Tracey Workman, and they have three children, Taylor, Katie, and Hannah.